

Heritage Yukon

Winter/Spring 2018 Newsletter



2017 Annual Yukon Heritage Awards ceremony. Credit: Jake Paleczny



Yukon Historical &
Museums Association

YHMA NEWS & EVENTS

From the Desk of the Executive Director | Lianne Maitland



Credit: Lianne Maitland

With the end of the fiscal year fast approaching it's been very satisfying to compile this newsletter and look back on all that YHMA has done in the last six months. And when I consider that YHMA accomplished even more in the first six months of the year, I

can't help but be immensely proud of the work that this organization does and look forward to what the next fiscal year will bring.

Below, and over the next few pages, you can find details about all the events YHMA organized over the last few months, including celebratory, public, learning, and networking events. While we do a lot of work behind the scenes, I especially enjoy coordinating events that make our work more tangible and get the community involved.

Not mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter's pages is our annual Heritage Day colouring contest. Once again, we commissioned Yukon artist Chris Caldwell to create a colouring page linked to the year's theme, "Heritage Stands the Test of Time." I'd like to congratulate our 2018 winner, Evelyn Low, and honourable mention, Betty Sjodin. Fabulous colouring! I'd also like to thank Parks Canada for donating the prizes.

We've also been busy at the YHMA office. Our President, Sally Robinson, and Secretary, Cathy Hines, have been working hard to weed and organize YHMA's records. With the assistance of the Yukon Council of Archives' Community Archivist, Jenny Lu, they spent a whole week in the office working on dozens of record boxes from the Donnenworth House basement, uncovering many interesting gems in the process. Although there is much more work to be done, we are off to a great start.

These two superstar volunteers also recently organized a vintage and antiques sale over the Rendezvous Weekend as part of ongoing efforts to raise funds to replace the aging LePage Park boardwalk. The sale raised over \$750 and garnered lots of positive feedback. Receiptable donations to the boardwalk project can be made on our Canada Helps donation page at <https://bit.ly/2pzOPBJ> (LePage Park Maintenance Fund), or at the YHMA office.

As the fiscal year wraps up, so too will our current strategic plan, originally produced in 2013. As a result, we're currently undertaking a strategic planning project, scheduled for completion in May. We look forward to presenting a new 5-year strategic plan at our AGM.

Finally, plans are well underway for the 2018 Yukon/Stikine Regional Heritage Fair. After last year's record attendance, we're excited to be embarking on a new partnership with Yukon College just in time for the Fair's 20th anniversary, which will allow the Fair to continue to grow and welcome more students. Join us at the College on May 3rd!

Lianne Maitland

Culture Days / Doors Open 2017

On Saturday, September 30, 2017, visitors to Donnenworth House found a cozy gathering of current and former members and volunteers reflecting on YHMA's work over the years and having a laugh over some rather entertaining stories. Loree Stewart, David Sloan, and Brent Slobodin generously agreed to be storytellers for the event, sharing tales of their involvement with YHMA, while the public was invited to come listen. Although there were only a handful of visitors, those who came were in for the long haul, staying for several hours.

The afternoon proved to be both enlightening and enjoyable for visitors and current YHMA staff and board members in attendance. We captured most of the conversation in an audio recording, although unfortunately the media card filled up before the day was over! The stories will eventually be shared on the YHMA website.

On Friday and Saturday, we also offered tours of Donnenworth House and were thrilled that over a dozen visitors came out. Almost all indicated that they had never been inside before, and some said they were not previously aware of its heritage status. We look forward to inviting the public into Donnenworth House again this coming September!



Participants also enjoyed a tasty birthday cake in honour of YHMA's 40th anniversary. Credit: Lianne Maitland

YHMA NEWS & EVENTS

2017 Yukon Heritage Symposium

Nearly 30 Yukon heritage professionals gathered at the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture in Dawson City on October 26 for the 2017 Yukon Heritage Symposium. The theme for the day, "Activating Our Communities," reflected the importance of community to the heritage sector, as an audience, a source, and a resource. The day's seven presentations addressed a wide variety of relevant topics, from grassroots partnerships to collaborative, interdisciplinary creation to creating inclusive workplaces.

As the keynote speaker, Angela Drainville opened the day with an impressive rendition of a song from a musical on the history of Cobalt, Ontario. This project formed the focus of much of her presentation on how arts/heritage inter-sectoral collaborations can contextualize heritage and "place the human experience at the centre of the narrative." Coincidentally, Cobalt is also known as a mining centre—which, according to Drainville, who grew up there, has been rather overshadowed by the Klondike in the public consciousness! The presentation was quite inspiring and garnered numerous compliments.

Another notable presentation was a performance of the *Weaving Voices* project organized by Dawson-based artists Chris Clarke and Bo Yeung. Launched on June 11, 2017, *Weaving Voices* "is a narrated walk and sound installation that takes place in Klondike National Historic Site on the traditional territory of Tr'ondëk Hwëchin" and uses oral histories to expose the impact of colonialism on the First Nations community. Although restricted in location to KIAC this time, it was nonetheless a powerful and thought-provoking presentation.

The following day, Pixie Ingram Consulting taught a social media workshop, which YHMA organized in partnership with the Klondike Visitors Association. Although brief, it provided useful and interesting insights into social media.

Thank you to all speakers for a successful Symposium.



Our Executive Director experienced a Dawson snow fall for the first time during the Symposium. Credit: Lianne Maitland

Joe Boyle's 150th Birthday Party

On November 4, "Klondike" Joe Boyle, kitted out in a jaunty zebra-striped birthday hat, was in attendance (in cardboard form) at his 150th birthday party, held at Mount McIntyre Recreation Centre. The celebration, organized as a partnership between YHMA and the Royal Canadian Legion, featured family-friendly displays, music, dancing, and speeches. There was also a delicious birthday cake donated by Parks Canada, befitting Joe Boyle's status as a National Historic Person. A commemoration of the Yukon fallen of WWI opened the event.



Members of the Canadian Rangers pose with the colours of the 2nd Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade and a festive cardboard Joe Boyle at his 150th birthday celebration. Credit: Lianne Maitland

Perhaps the most exciting part of the day was the presence of the regimental colours, consisting of a Union Jack and a regimental flag, of the 2nd Canadian Motor Machine Gun Battery. This unit was made up of members of an earlier machine gun detachment sponsored by Joe Boyle in 1914 and members of the Black Contingent, raised by George Black. Commissioned in 1919, the colours normally reside in St. Paul's Anglican Church in Dawson City, and prior to this event had not left Dawson since 1922! You can learn more about the colours in member Michael Gates' "History Hunter" column in the *Yukon News* at <http://bit.ly/2HTJ2Oa>.

All in all, it was a fun day, and the dozens of attendees, including dignitaries, Canadian Rangers, local army cadets, and members of the public, had a great time. Now... what other landmarks birthdays are coming up?

YHMA NEWS & EVENTS

2017 Annual Yukon Heritage Awards

Kicking off Heritage Week, the 2017 Annual Yukon Heritage Awards ceremony was held at the Yukon Archives on Monday, February 19. The Heritage Awards celebrate the achievements of heritage champions within the Yukon, whether individuals, organizations, community groups, First Nations, or businesses.

Well over 50 attendees gathered to honour the six recipients, whose work has immeasurably enriched our community. We were delighted that five out of the six recipients were able to attend, including Leda Jules, who travelled from Watson Lake in the midst of a significant community project to be part of the celebration.

To open the evening, Dr. Brent Slobodin, Yukon's newly-appointed representative on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, gave a brief presentation on the work of the Board and key changes occurring under the administrative direction of Minister for the Environment Catherine McKenna. This was a great introduction to the Board and its important role in safeguarding Canadian heritage, and to how anyone interested can submit nominations to the Board.



Dr. Brent Slobodin addresses the crowd. Credit: Jake Paleczny

During the awards presentation, attendees were treated to some great yarns from the recipients, including Alice Cyr's stories about her late husband, Paul Cyr, and Bessie Cooley's reminiscences about the Freddie and Nina Johnston House. These stories were wonderful reminders of how we are all a part of our community's heritage.

The evening wrapped up with socializing over refreshments sponsored by the Historic Sites Unit, a lovely end to a great evening. Thank you to all who came out.

Congratulations to the following 2017 winners:

Leda Jules (Annual Heritage Award): For over the last five decades, Leda Jules has worked tirelessly to promote and protect the Kaska language, culture, and heritage.



Bessie Cooley reminisces about the Freddie and Nina Johnston House. Credit: Jake Paleczny

She has spent her life both sharing and passing on her ancestors' ways to generations of Kaska and non-Kaska alike. This "passing on" includes keeping Kaska stories and the Kaska language alive, as well as generously sharing the knowledge she has accumulated by listening to and living on the land. A fluent speaker of the Pelly dialect, Leda has worked with numerous organizations, institutions, linguists, and academics to document and develop resources for the Kaska language. She also translates audio and video recordings, contributing to the preservation not only of the Kaska language but also of the knowledge and cultural traditions expressed in the recordings.

Peggy D'Orsay (History Maker Award): Peggy D'Orsay held the position of Archives Librarian at the Yukon Archives from 1990 to her retirement in January 2017. Peggy's innumerable accomplishments during her tenure at the Archives, among many others, include advocating for and producing many special topic bibliographies, leading the Yukon Archives digital books project, and developing the Yukon Genealogy website. Peggy was also instrumental in the formation of Hidden Histories Society Yukon, coining the phrase "hidden histories" herself. She continues to be involved in the Society to this day, helping to enlarge the representation of Asian, Black, and other ethno-cultural individuals and groups in the documentation and interpretation of Yukon history.

Alice Cyr (Helen Couch Volunteer of the Year Award): Alice Cyr started volunteering at the Yukon Transportation Museum (YTM) in 2016, taking on the immense job of cataloguing a large collection of photographs and objects that she had donated earlier in the year. During this process, Alice worked with YTM Executive Director Janna Swales to create a dedicated collections and research work area and to pilot a new accessioning system designed to facilitate community involvement. Alice has

YHMA NEWS & EVENTS

Heritage Awards cont'd.

also created a virtual exhibit entitled *Paul Cyr Loved Cats* using materials she donated, available on the YTM website, which also opened as a physical exhibit at YTM in February 2018.

Lily Gontard & Mark Kelly (Innovation, Education, and Community Engagement Award): In their 2017 publication *Beyond Mile Zero: The Vanishing Alaska Highway Lodge Community*, writer Lily Gontard and photographer Mark Kelly deftly combine personal stories from current and former lodge owners and their families with stunning archival and contemporary photographs to tell the story of the Alaska Highway lodges and lodge communities. Compiled after countless hours of interviews and travels along the highway, *Beyond Mile Zero* captures the spirit those who live and have lived at the lodges, and documents both the tangible and intangible elements a disappearing highway lodge lifestyle.



The 2017 award recipients. L-R: Tip Evans and Bessie Cooley (on behalf of Teslin Tlingit Council), Leda Jules, Lily Gontard, Alice Cyr, Peggy D'Orsay. Missing: Mark Kelly. Credit: Jake Paleczny

Teslin Tlingit Council (Heritage Conservation Project of the Year Award): The Teslin Tlingit Council (TTC) receives this award for the conservation and restoration of the Freddie and Nina Johnston House. A TTC building in the Wolf Clan built in the late 1920s or early 1930s, the Freddie and Nina Johnston House is the last remaining frame house of its style and age in Teslin. Over the past six years, TTC has shown dedication and care in the restoration of the house. Consultations with Elders and historic photos and documents helped to inform the restoration work and ensure that the heritage value of the house was maintained. Work on this well-known historic building has often prompted members of the community to share their memories of the house and its relationship within the community. TTC plans to continue restoration of the building in 2018. This award is sponsored by the Department of Tourism and Culture, Government of Yukon.

MEMBER CONTRIBUTION

The Yukon Field Force: Nominal Rolls and Photographs | Tim Popp

After collecting information and material on the Yukon Field Force for the past 45-odd years I have decided to share it with the public and like-minded researchers. This virtually unknown Canadian military unit was formed by the Canadian Government in 1898 to help the North West Mounted Police deal with the Klondike Gold Rush in the Yukon Territory. It was one of the first instances of Canada showing its sovereignty.

Comprised of two hundred men and officers from the Royal Canadian Artillery, Royal Canadian Dragoons, and the Royal Canadian Regiment, this unit trekked north through some of the worst bush and swamp of northern British Columbia. It then navigated the inland waters of the Yukon Territory to reach its final destination of Fort Selkirk and later Dawson City. The unit remained in the Yukon for the better part of two years, at which time the Canadian Government decided they were no longer required as there was a need for troops for the Anglo Boer War in South Africa.

My research lists all names of the enlisted men and officers that served in the YFF. It has been cross-referenced with the Library and Archives of Canada records and files of those members who later served in the Anglo Boer War and First World War. I have located many photographs of the YFF, some that have never been seen before. As well, I have gathered the unit badges of the troops and located pictures of associated medal groups from various collections.

The year 2018 marks the 120th anniversary of the Yukon Field Force and I hope to have this publication finished this spring. If anyone has any information on the YFF and wishes to share it, please contact me as soon as possible at Tim Popp, P.O. Box 563, Battleford, Saskatchewan, S0M 0E0 or tim060@sasktel.net.



Yukon Field Force Gold Escort. Credit: Provincial Archives of Alberta

HTF TRAINING REPORTS

Archives Institute, Archives Society of Alberta | Alex Somerville



Alex at the Provincial Archives of Alberta. Credit: Alex Somerville

With support from the Yukon Heritage Training Fund, Alex Somerville, Executive Director of the Dawson City Museum, was able to spend a week at the Provincial Archives of Alberta, learning how to better play the role of archivist.

The week-long course was organized by the Archives Society of Alberta, and promised a complete introduction to the state of the art in archival science. “One

of the very interesting things was learning how things are organized when archivists are in charge,” says Alex. “At the Museum, we face different demands, and so we do things a little differently. Archivists, I learned, are trained to deal with huge volumes of records, and so in archives the descriptions are more general. At an archive you may find a description of what kinds of documents are in a box, but you won’t find a description of the contents of a letter, or a description of every photo. At the Museum, we find it is important to describe every item as well as we can as soon as possible.”

The course involved lectures and presentations from different staff at the Provincial Archives of Alberta, including a media archivist. “Hearing from a media archivist helped give me a lot of direction and tips to bring back to the Museum. We do have some hundred-year-old photos that are starting to suffer from a degradation called “silvering,” and I learned that there’s nothing to stop it. Those photos are at the top of our list now for digitization.”

Alex says that taking the course will not only help him work better in the archives at the Museum: “Having taken the course, knowing the language of archives better, I have a much better idea of how to explain and describe our archives’ needs, and hopefully that will improve our grant applications and help bring some more money into the museum.” And the best part of the week-long course? Alex says that was getting the chance to talk up Dawson to a roomful of Albertans all week!

Exhibition Design and Installation | Angharad Wenz

Looking at Exhibitions

Thanks to support from the Yukon Heritage Training Fund, I was lucky enough to spend one week on an *Exhibition Design and Installation* course at the University of Victoria in March 2017. Sharing a classroom with professionals from across the country (NWT to PEI) was a valuable opportunity to learn from a range of experience in institutions of varying scale and style. The course itself looked at the exhibition development process within the wider contexts of institutional values and the visitor experience. Curriculum was focused more on the interpretive and conceptual planning of exhibitions rather than the physical design and installation of exhibit space, highlighting the importance of clear purpose and process in creating successful exhibitions.

Looking To Our Visitors

Our primary lessons focused on visitor psychology - i.e., motivations and behaviour - and how museums can harness these patterns to improve the overall visitor experience. This knowledge can be embodied in physical design (more seating, size of font, etc.) or more subtly through the tone of exhibition text or the conceptual organization of displays, for example. For me, looking towards our new permanent exhibits, it was important to think about what we (the Dawson City Museum) wanted our visitors to take away, and how these aims and objectives could be achieved or delivered. Much centres on knowing our visitors and what they want, which can be a challenge. It is difficult to disregard our own assumptions



The class at Craigdarroch Castle. Credit: Angharad Wenz

HTF TRAINING REPORTS

about the public, and to constantly test these presumptions and stay tuned to our visitors. Ultimately, our instructor stressed that it was important for museum professionals to not only be in love with the material - the objects, the stories, the subject matter - but also the visitors. The visitors' experience - and enjoyment - should be a guiding principle informing any exhibition or program design.



Interactive elements. Credit: Angharad Wenz

Looking Closer

Critique was a constant tactic to reinforce principles taught in class - to essentially discover what worked and what doesn't work in exhibitions. Much focus was put on the analysis of both our own and other museums' projects. We were offered an opportunity to practice such an exercise at the Royal BC Museum, where we presented our critiques of current displays to the Head of Exhibitions. A similar exercise proposing alternative displays was also held at Craigdarroch Castle. These opportunities gave me much food for thought, particularly in considering ongoing and future exhibition development. It was also an interesting opportunity to experience difference styles of storytelling, and what these distinct museums did to support their narratives. Accordingly, we were tutored in how to communicate concepts through positioning, cases, signage, lighting, colour, texture, etc. To help us realize this, an exhibit fabricator from RBCM offered a workshop on mount and prop making. Many of the techniques I learned will be used for new displays of object. Ultimately, if our artifacts are not presented properly and professionally, then even with the best laid plans, exhibitions can fall short. Guiding visitors on where and how to look is important element in considering the design of new displays.

Looking Forward

The opportunity to visit local museums also allowed me to see the techniques being used in some of the nations' best institutions. The creative use of immersive settings (touch, sound, and smell!), digital interactives (from touch tables to iPad guides), and other participatory elements was eye - and mind - opening. The award-winning "Our Living Languages: First Peoples' Voices in BC" exhibit in particular was a testament to this thoughtful and interactive design. Discussions with staff involved in the creation of this and other exhibitions at the Royal BC Museum and Craigdarroch Castle offered insight into their process and problems, and revealed useful tips that I have applied at the Dawson City Museum. Within class, daily "inspirations" - examples of profound or innovative exhibitions from museums across the world - anchored each day's lessons, and helped focus our attention on real-world possibilities. These cases at best provided practical ideas that could be adapted in our own institutions, and at the very least gave a benchmark to aspire to.

Overall, the course certainly recharged my enthusiasm for the field and for the future of Dawson City Museum. The skills and strategies I learned in Victoria have been put to use as we plan new permanent and temporary exhibits. Perhaps most importantly, this training reminded me of our institutional mission and values. It is easy to get bogged down in daily minutiae of museum work, and to forget about our role as a "third space" for the public to enjoy. Our practice should always be centered on crafting the best possible experience for visitors - be they residents or tourists.



The Royal BC Museum's award-winning "Our Living Languages: First Peoples' Voice in BC" exhibit. Credit: Angharad Wenz



Are you a heritage sector worker looking to improve your skills?

The Yukon Heritage Training Fund provides support for training and professional development opportunities for the Yukon heritage sector. Applications are reviewed on a quarterly basis.

Intake deadlines are October 15, January 15, April 15, and July 15.

Visit heritageyukon.ca, email info@heritageyukon.ca, or call 667-4704 for more information.

Have you received funding from HTF?
We'd love to share your experiences in this newsletter. Contact us if you'd like to contribute!

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Established in 1977, YHMA works to inspire and share a passion for Yukon heritage. Our membership reflects the scope and diversity of the Yukon heritage community.

Our newsletter is published twice annually. Copies of previous issues are available at heritageyukon.ca. Want to stay up-to-date between issues? Subscribe to our weekly e-bulletin by visiting our website or by sending us an email.



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